



NEWS RELEASE

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RENTAL PRICE GOUGING IN WILDFIRE AREAS: CALIFORNIA REAL ESTATE COMMISSIONER WARNS AGAINST IT

*Agency will investigate complaints against real estate licensees
involved in unlawful housing price gouging.*

SACRAMENTO, CA -- The California Bureau of Real Estate (CalBRE) today issued a warning against price gouging for rental housing for wildfire victims.

California Real Estate Commissioner Wayne Bell said the practice is a criminal offense in counties where a state of emergency has been declared.

"The people who have suffered losses due to the horrific fires, and who find themselves either temporarily or permanently displaced, should never have to suffer further from rent price gouging," Bell said.

CalBRE is currently conducting an investigation into possible unlawful "price gouging" of rental housing by licensees in the wake of the recent wildfires in Northern California.

Bell pointed out that the law on price gouging or taking unfair advantage of consumers also applies to hotel and motel rates and to consumer food items and other goods and services. Price gouging is punishable by imprisonment or a fine of not more than \$10,000, or by both the fine and imprisonment. Unlawful business practice actions can also be brought against licensees who violate the anti-price gouging law.

Bell said CalBRE will carefully investigate claims of price gouging by its licensees and will take appropriate disciplinary action. To report illegal conduct by a real estate licensee, go to the bureau's website at www.dre.ca.gov and click on "consumers" and "file a complaint."

To view Penal Code 396, which addresses price gouging in disaster zones, go to:
<http://codes.findlaw.com/ca/penal-code/pen-sect-396.html>.

The California Bureau of Real Estate (CalBRE) safeguards and promotes public interests in real estate matters through licensure, regulation, education and enforcement.

The Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) promotes and protects the interests of California Consumers. Consumers can file complaints against licensees by contacting DCA at (800) 952-5210. Consumers can also file a complaint online at www.dca.ca.gov.

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